

VZCZCXRO7268
PP RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0297/01 0321349
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 011349Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5526
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000297

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRT MAYSAN: MAYSAN'S TRIBAL LANDSCAPE

[1](#)1. (U) The material in this cable is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

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[1](#)2. (U) This is a PRT Maysan reporting cable.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Summary: Maysan,s tribal landscape is primarily made up of five tribal confederations and over thirty tribal organizations. The Bani Lam, the Albu Muhammad, and the az-Zairaj are the most prominent tribal confederations and each provincial region features a number of notable tribal organizations. End Summary.

Tribal Structure -----

[1](#)4. (SBU) Maysan,s tribal landscape is primarily made up of five tribal confederations (qabeela) and over thirty tribal organizations ('ashira). The most basic unit of Iraqi tribal structure is the extended family (khams or bayt). A number of extended families can form a clan (fakhdh) and a group of clans can form a tribal organization. Finally, a group of tribal organizations can form a confederation.

Tribal authority -----

[1](#)5. (SBU) The authority of tribal leaders, called shaykhs (plural shuyukh) historically stemmed both from personal influence and largesse as well as from nobility and lineage. In theory, especially among Shi'a tribes, leadership is confined to one lineage. In practice, though, authority often turns out to be a function of the success of a leader in defending the tribal patrimony and resolving and managing conflict. The heart of the tribal system is theoretically a fairly democratic process of consultation in the tribal council and, in some cases, the ability of members to challenge the shaykh. Likewise, tribal confederations by their very nature are voluntary alignments from which each tribe is free to secede at will. Historically, tribal alliances were not hard and fast, but the tribal system supplied the people with a needed identity and sense of security and a blueprint for the resolution of conflicts. Finally, the tribal system in much of the Shi,a Arab south is somewhat different from that of the Sunni Arab center-north, in that southern tribes are reportedly more fragmented: the tribal shaykh often shares leadership with sayyids (descendents of the Prophet) plural: sadah) and the ulama (learned religious leadership).

The Confederations -----

[1](#)6. (SBU) The Bani Lam, Albu Muhammad, and az-Zairaj are the most significant confederations. The Bani Lam is a pastoral confederation that migrated from the lower Tigris into Persian territory (now Iran). The Iranian province of Ilam

to the northeast of Maysan shares the name of the founder of the Iraqi section of the tribe. The Albu Muhammad reportedly descend from the Zubayd Azza tribe (located north of Baghdad in provinces like Diyala) and is made up of both settled cultivators (fallah) and the Ma,dan. The az-Zairaj traditionally cultivated rice along the branches of the Tigris in the southwestern corner of the province.

Areas of influence

¶7. (SBU) The Maysan confederations are the Bani Lam, the Albu Muhammad, the az-Zairaj, the al-Muntafiq, and the Ka'ab.

Historically, the Bani Lam,s area of influence stretched from northern Maysan to al- Amara and covers the following regions: Ali al-Gharbi and al- Amara. The Albu Muhammad are influential south of al- Amara in the following regions: al- Amara, al-Majjar al-Kabeer (MAK), Qal,at Salih, and al-Kahla. Al- Amara was established during the Ottoman period at the boundary between the Bani Lam and the Albu Muhammad. The az-Zairaj groupings are primarily found in the al-Maymona region and the al-Muntafiq (mostly in Dhi Qar) and Ka'ab (mostly in Iran) reach into the southwestern and southeastern corners of the provinces respectively.

Notable tribes

¶8. (SBU) Each of the major Maysan confederations consists of several tribal organizations. In the Ali al-Gharbi region, the as-Suwaid reside along the border with Iran. The as-Sa'adi tribe also reside along the border near the at-Teeb border crossing. The Albu Darraj, the al-Bahadil, the al-Gharrawi, the al-Mussawi, and the at-Tameem reside in the al- Amara region. The al-Ba'azun, the al-Issa, and the ash-Shaghanba are in al-Maymona. The al-Fartus and the Albu

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'Ali are located in al-Majjar al-Kabeer (MAK). The al-Faraijat and the Albu Bakhait straddle MAK and Qal,at Salih. In addition to these two cross-regional sub-tribes, in Qal,at Salih there are the Bani Malik, the at-Turaba, the al-Aanza, the ash-Shamus, the al-Hedrea, the Albu Ghanam, and the an-Nawafil. These final two tribes in addition to the Albu Bukhait make up what is known as the Shadda or a region in southeastern Maysan that traditionally contained a large and unruly portion of the Albu Muhammad. Finally, al-Kahla is home to the remainder of the as-Sudan. This is not an exhaustive list of the sub-tribes present in each region, but represents some of the more significant tribes. Moreover, many of these tribes can be found in other regions of the province, particularly in the urban centers of al- Amara and MAK.

¶9. (SBU) Comment: Maysan is a relatively opaque province, but PRT efforts continue to shed light on the overall social and political environment in the province. In discussions regarding the social and political structure of Maysan, tribal affiliation has taken a backseat to religio-political association, but tribes maintain an important place in Maysan society and may prove to wield significant social, if not political, influence. The PRT will continue to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Maysan,s tribes in order to facilitate broader engagement with the people of Maysan.
END COMMENT.
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